The Power of Art – The life of Mine

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Gin Lane (1751)

Hogarth created this engraving to show the negative impact of the gin craze in London. In the front, you see a woman with sores dropping her baby, people starving, and other terrible effects of gin. Behind them, there's chaos with poor people selling their tools for gin and a woman feeding alcohol to a baby. There's also suicide, madness, and murder,

hinting at society falling apart, symbolized by a collapsing building. This artwork was part of a campaign to support the 1751 Gin Act, which aimed to reduce drinking and its harmful effects on society.

Etching and engraving – Tate, United Kingdom.

A Rake's Progress – The Tavern Scene, Plate III (1734)

This painting depicts Tom Rakewell in a brothel, drunk and engaged in a wild night of debauchery. A prostitute with marks from disease is reaching under his shirt to steal from him. Around him, a stripper is undressing, a tradesman is fondling another prostitute, and two women are preparing for a spitting contest. The scene captures Tom's descent into a life of vice, highlighting the consequences of his reckless behavior after inheriting his father's wealth.

Oil on canvas – Sir John Soane's Museum, London

Cutting the Stone (c.1490)

Cutting the Stone” illustrates a 15th-century medical procedure known as trepanation, where a “stone of madness” is removed from a man’s brain. The scene, set in a Gothic frame, depicts a peasant undergoing surgery by a doctor wearing a funnel-shaped hat.

Interestingly, instead of a stone, the doctor extracts a waterlily, symbolizing lust and possibly an allusion to castration.

The painting is notable for its incorporation of visual and verbal elements, including a calligraphic inscription that plays on the name “Lubbert Das”—a term with connotations of foolishness and laziness. Art historian Pilar Silva highlighted Bosch’s innovative use of imagery and text to create a complex visual and verbal game. The surreal nature of the painting has influenced later artists, including Leonora Carrington, who reworked the theme in her 1960 painting “Adieu Ammenotep.

Oil on Board – Museo del Prado, Madrid

The Temptation of St. Anthony

Painted between 1500 and 1516, The Temptation of St. Anthony presents the saint in a serene landscape, sitting in a hollow tree trunk. Anthony, who is devoted to chastity, faces temptation from apparitions of beautiful women. To ward them off, he bites his own

tongue and spits it at the spirits. Bosch depicts Anthony with more precise brushwork than usual, emphasizing his role as a model of virtue.

Surrounded by Bosch's characteristic hybrid creatures, Anthony is seen in peaceful contemplation, holding a rosary and wearing a cloak with a cross symbol. Despite the idyllic setting, with elements like a monastery and humble home, the painting contrasts this tranquility with the looming presence of Bosch's fantastical, sinister beings. The work underscores the theme of piety triumphing over sin.

Oil on panel – Museo del Prado, Madrid